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United States Department of Agriculture

PRODUCTION AND MARKETING ADMINISTRATION

SERVICE AND REGULATORY ANNOUNCEMENTS NO. 172

OFFICIAL UNITED STATES STANDARDS FOR GRADES OF SLAUGHTER SWINE (BARROWS AND GILTS)

(Title 7, Ch. I, Pt. 53, Sections 53.150–53.153 of the Code of Federal Regulations)

The following is a reprint of the official United States standards for the grades of slaughter barrows and gilts promulgated by the Secretary of Agriculture under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (60 Stat. 1087; 7 U. S. C. 1621 et seq.) and the item for Marketing Services recurring in the annual appropriation act for the United States Department of Agriculture and currently found in the Department of Agriculture Appropriation Act, 1953 (Pub. Law 451, 82d Cong.).

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDARDS

A system of classifying and grading market hogs was formulated by the United States Department of Agriculture in 1918 for use in the livestock market reporting service. The system was developed with the cooperation and assistance of many interested agencies and represented the most generally accepted market groupings of the time. After meetings with producers, animal husbandmen, market representatives, and slaughterers in 1928 and 1929, revisions were made, consistent with changes in production and marketing conditions, and tentative standards were issued in 1930. Further revisions were incorporated into the tentative standards in 1940 when they were published in Circular No. 569.

The United States Department of Agriculture proposed new standards for grades of slaughter barrows and gilts in 1949. Field testing, discussion, and demonstration of the standards resulted in slight revisions before promulgation, by the Secretary of Agriculture, as the official United States standards for grades of slaughter barrows and gilts, effective September 12, 1952.

BASES FOR SWINE STANDARDS

The market standards for swine developed by the United States Department of Agriculture provide for segregation according to (a) intended use, as slaughter or feeder and stocker animals, (b) class, as determined by sex condition, and (c) grade, or degree of excellence and suitability for a particular purpose.

SLAUGHTER SWINE CLASSES

There are five classes of slaughter swine—barrows, gilts, sows, stags, and boars.

BARROW

A barrow is a male swine castrated when young and before development of the secondary physical characteristics of a boar.

GILT

A gilt is a female swine that has not produced young and has not reached an evident stage of pregnancy.

SOW

A sow is a female swine that shows evidence of having reproduced or has reached an evident stage of pregnancy.

STAG

A stag is a male swine castrated after development or beginning of development of the secondary physical characteristics of a boar.

BOAR

A boar is an uncastrated male swine.

APPLICATION OF STANDARDS FOR GRADES OF SLAUGHTER BARROWS AND GILTS

In the barrow and gilt classes, sex condition has exerted little effect on secondary physical characteristics, and barrows and gilts are treated as a single class in marketing and for standardization purposes. Therefore, the grade standards are equally applicable to both slaughter barrows and gilts.

The standards are based on the standards for grades of barrow and gilt carcasses. The two major factors forming the bases for the grades are (1) differences in yield of lean cuts and of fat cuts, and (2) differences in quality of cuts. There are rather consistent variations in these characteristics from one grade of barrows and gilts to another. The grade standards identify the hogs which produce pork of each of the three grades—Choice, Medium, and Cull. Choice grade barrows and gilts have at least the minimum finish required to produce Choice grade pork cuts in which the lean is firm and has sufficient marbling, or fat interspersed within the lean, to result in the tenderness, juiciness, and flavor associated with acceptable palatability. Hogs of Choice grade produce comparable quality lean cuts, but may differ widely in the degree of fatness. Hence, this grade is further divided into three segments—No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3—to reflect the decreased yields of lean cuts and increased yields of fat cuts as finish exceeds the minimum required for the Choice grade. Medium grade barrows and gilts are slightly to moderately underfinished and have higher ratios of lean to fat than Choice grade hogs, but they produce Medium grade pork cuts in which the lean is slightly soft and has little or no marbling. Cull grade hogs are decidedly underfinished resulting in higher lean to fat ratios than in any other grade, but they produce Cull grade pork cuts which are soft and watery and have no visible marbling in the lean.

Application of the standards requires an accurate appraisal of the live animal characteristics which indicate the grade. The standards describe the characteristics of typical animals having the minimum degree of finish for each grade. No attempt is made to describe the numerous combinations of characteristics that may indicate the qualifications for a specific grade, and making appropriate compensations for varying combinations requires the use of sound judgment.

The general limits of grades for barrows and gilts are determined by degree of finish, but other factors are considered in certain cases to accomplish further refinement of the grades. Animals at the borderlines between the divisions of the Choice grade with respect to degree of finish are graded by consideration of length in relation to weight and other body proportions, conformation of hams, loins, bellies, and shoulders, and uniformity of width, depth, and fat covering of the animal. The application of these compensating factors is limited primarily to borderline cases within the Choice grade, and the final grade division of an animal is in no case more than one-half the width of a grade division different than that indicated by apparent degree of finish.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR OFFICIAL UNITED STATES STANDARDS FOR GRADES OF SLAUGHTER BARROWS AND GILTS

CHOICE NO. 1

Slaughter barrows and gilts of this division of Choice grade have an intermediate degree of finish as indicated by body proportions and other evidences of fatness. Hogs of the minimum finish for Choice No. 1 tend to be moderately wide over the top, and width of body over the top appears nearly equal to that at the underline. The back, from side to side, is moderately full and thick and usually appears well-rounded and blends smoothly into the sides. Width through the hams is usually nearly equal to that through the shoulders. The sides

appear moderately long and thick and are usually smooth; the flanks are slightly thick and full. Depth at the rear flank may be slightly less than depth at the fore flank. Hams tend to be moderately thick and full with a slightly thick covering of fat. Jowls are usually trim but moderately full and thick. Barrows and gilts in this grade division produce Choice No. 1 carcasses.

CHOICE NO. 2

Slaughter barrows and gilts of this grade division have a high degree of finish as indicated by body proportions and other evidences of fatness. Hogs of the minimum finish for Choice No. 2 tend to be wide over the top, and width of body appears slightly greater over the top than at the underline. The back, from side to side, is full and thick and often appears slightly flat with a noticeable break into the sides. Width may be slightly greater through the shoulders than through the hams. The sides appear slightly short, thick, and smooth; the flanks are moderately thick and full. Depth at the rear flank is nearly equal to that at the fore flank. Hams tend to be thick and full with a moderately thick covering of fat, especially over the lower part. Jowls are usually full and thick, and the neck appears short. Barrows and gilts in this grade division produce Choice No. 2 carcasses.

CHOICE NO. 3

Slaughter barrows and gilts of this grade division have a very high degree of finish as indicated by body proportions and other evidences of fatness. Hogs possessing the minimum finish for Choice No. 3 tend to be very wide over the top, and width of body appears somewhat greater over the top than at the underline. The back, from side to side, is very full and thick and often appears nearly flat with a pronounced break into the sides. Width may be greater through the shoulders than through the hams. The sides appear short, thick, and smooth; the flanks are thick and full. Depth at the rear flank is equal to depth at the fore flank. Hams tend to be very thick and full with a thick covering of fat, especially over the lower part. Jowls are very thick and full, and the neck appears very short. Barrows and gilts in this grade division produce Choice No. 3 carcasses.

MEDIUM

Slaughter barrows and gilts of this grade have a slightly low degree of finish as indicated by body proportions and other evidences of fatness. Hogs possessing the minimum finish for the grade tend to be narrow over the top, and width over the top appears slightly less than that at the underline. The back, from side to side, is slightly thin and appears peaked at the center, especially at and immediately behind the shoulders, with a distinct slope toward the sides. Hips may appear slightly prominent. Width may be slightly less through the shoulders than through the hams. The sides appear long and slightly thin and wrinkled, with thin flanks. Depth at the rear flank is less than that at the fore flank. Hams tend to be thin and flat with a slight taper toward the shanks. Jowls are usually slightly thin and flat, and the neck appears rather long. Barrows and gilts in this grade produce Medium grade carcasses.

CULL

Slaughter barrows and gilts of this grade are decidedly lacking in finish. Hogs with the fleshing typical of the grade are narrow over the top, and width of body appears somewhat less over the top than at the underline. The back, from side to side, is thin, lacks fullness, and appears peaked at the center with a decided slope toward the sides. Hips are prominent. Width may be somewhat less through the shoulders than through the hams. The sides appear very long, thin, and wrinkled, and the flanks are very thin. Depth at the rear flank is considerably less than depth at the fore flank. Hams are very thin and flat with a decided taper toward the shanks. Jowls are usually very thin and flat, and the neck appears very long. Barrows and gilts in this grade produce Cull grade carcasses.

